

THE LUTHERAN VISITOR.

"ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM"—EPHESIANS IV: 6.

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Communications.

For the Lutheran Visitor.
Feasting versus Fasting.
Dear Editor: Our Saviour was once asked why the disciples of John fasted and his disciples did not. In his answer he gave them to understand that during his personal presence with them the necessity of fasting was superseded by his constant care and provision for them; but he intimated that those would soon, in the absence of the church, find fasting would become indispensable. These times do occur, and then become common and added greatly to the spirituality of the church. It seems to me that with the addition to the present condition of the church, could be easily designated for a general fast throughout our entire country that would result in great good. I do not mean the fast of abstaining from meat and gorging ourselves with fish and eggs, or the "no work, no play, no fun" fast, but a fast of the heart, of the soul, of the mind, and of the body, accompanied by deep, earnest prayer, such as God "delights to hear."
I was led to these thoughts by the transactions of the recent Alliance in our country. Banquets, collations, entertainments of the most expensive character, parties, societies, and feasting, all the time, as though they had not to celebrate a great calling party. The Grand Feast, ordained for perpetual observance by our Saviour, was wholly omitted, and substituted what was not substituted. I read the morning paper, and in the telegraphic columns observed the following, after giving the exercises in Independence Hall, the names of the speakers, &c.: "The Dean of Canterbury closed the services in the Hall with prayer, after which the delegates proceeded in a body to a banquet of welcome in the Continental Hotel." Thence they go to Washington to speak, about themselves to the President, and then out. Where next the programme does not say; but of one thing we may be sure, there will be banquets and feasting and eating as long as these worthies are in America. Query: What leverage is used to wash down all those rich viands? Perhaps the water of America does not agree with foreigners!
It is very customary at present, in many localities, to have reception parlors, or social halls, connected with the house of worship, where all the members and invited friends may hold a sociable, and—out; for there is invariably a collation to end up the sociable. All this is expensive, and I think sinful. I merely think so because I may be an old fogey, lagging far in the rear of modern progress. One good brother of the Alliance read a paper in which he made certain calculations of men and money sufficient to convert the world. The whole is to be done by human agency and gold. God does not enter into his calculations. His aid will be unnecessary. Rev. Jos. Angus, D.D., modestly asks for the use of 50,000 ministers for ten years, and the trifle of 150,000,000 pounds sterling, or in our money say \$750,000,000, and he will undertake to carry the Gospel to every man, woman and child on earth. God has nothing to do with this. Rev. Jos. Angus, D.D., will undertake the work on his own hook. The papers call this a "gigantic scheme."
Allow me to suggest a counter scheme. It is very simple. Take all the money spent for collations, refreshments, banquets, or in other words for unnecessary and sinful eating, and place it with fervent prayer into the hands of the Lord, and let Him select missionaries, instead of Rev. Joseph Angus, D.D., and the work will be done as soon, and ten thousand times more effectually. Yes, let fasting, accompanied with prayer, be substituted for feasting, accompanied frequently with Paul's "inconvenient jesting," and God will furnish both men and means to convert the world without the aid of Rev. Joseph Angus, D.D. But I forbear, lest my readers should call me
CYNIC.

Selections.

"Praying, the Heaven was Opened."
Like thus presents the scene on the occasion of the baptism of John. The Saviour prays, and his ascending prayer opens heaven to let down the Holy Ghost upon him as the accredited of the Father, coming down from heaven in order to lead as there, and pointing out the way. He said by the act, "Prayer is the heaven-opening ordinance; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."
There are, unfortunately, a great many who believe in no other heaven than the stary vault; in no other light than that which comes from the sun or other luminous bodies, and in no other combination than the reflections of the sun or of the moon. They see no other God in the world than Force or Law; and as there were those in Palestine who did not know that there was any Holy Ghost to be received, so there are those now who doubt if there be any God to be sought or any heaven to be opened. That they journey to the grave they know; but beyond that all is uncertainty. Out of this many have been led by prayer, where men suddenly without them in Doubt, about the doctrine of immortality, they have been flooded with its light by doing Christ's will in the light of application, and doctrine has become realization. No longer the wanderers of a day, they have found themselves the heirs of eternity, and out of the darkness of desolation and isolation, have awoken to the consciousness of having a loving Father in heaven.
Washington Allston, one of our best painters and poets, tells us in what way he was led from the enjoyment of jests at sacred subjects, into an abiding trust in them. Having married the sister of Dr. Chauncy, he made his second visit to Europe, and settled in London as an artist. He met with little success; may, was at a loss for the means of procuring the necessities of life. Reflecting one day almost with a feeling of desperation upon his condition, his heart all at once was filled with the hope that God would help him if he only asked. Accordingly he locked his door, withdrew himself upon his knees in prayer. He was aroused by one knocking at the door. He opened it to a stranger, who announced himself as the Marquis of Stafford, who inquired if his painter of the angel Uriel was sold? Receiving a negative reply, the nobleman paid him four hundred pounds for the beautiful production; was so pleased that he introduced the poor painter to the leading nobility and gentry, and thus to immense fame and fortune. Allston never regarded this as a mere happy coincidence; the feeling which led him to pray, the immediate relief he looked upon as the direct interposition of God in his behalf. Fixed devotional habits became predominant traits in his character to the end of his life.
The bringing of the world that now is into connection with that which is to come, so that the influences and powers of that higher sphere shall be a matter of conscious enjoyment, is not the delusion of fanaticism. Experience will amply corroborate the representations of Scripture, that such acquisitions come through prayer. No one can doubt the existence of a world whose inhabitants he sees. When Daniel prayed, the angel Gabriel was sent from the palace of the great King all at once to the kneeling prophet. When the aged Zacharias stood in supplication before the altar, he was astonished to see the same glorious being standing with its answer, saying, "Thy prayer is heard." The evening devotions of the Roman Cornelius opened the way for the heavenly messenger to announce his acceptance with God; and the noontday prayer of Peter prevailed to the unfolding of its doors, letting down the tokens of Gentile salvation. Heaven is the seat of power. The apostles were to wait in prayer within Jerusalem in order to be endowed with it. Their united supplications brought it down upon them from heaven like a mighty rushing wind. If Franklin knew that he drew the electricity of the clouds through his kite-string, so the apostles were persuaded that the fire of God fell on them in answer to prayer. Many praying assemblies in our own day have received a similar visitation of spiritual energy.

The Effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous operateth mightily and universally.

The effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous operateth mightily and universally. If put forth to the effect, the powers of heaven will be found to work wonders on earth on a scale before unknown.
It is only in this way that men can be brought to see Jesus in his full glory as Head of the church and Governor of the universe. When the martyr Stephen prayed, he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God." The full glory of Christ is revealed to the soul only in consequence of a similar "steadfast looking towards heaven." When the Redeemer "poured upon the souls the fullness of his countenance," and he who prays in like manner will see the glory of God in that Divine face, and the countenance of the Suppliant himself will reflect the brightness which he has seen. Joseph went up to the throne of God with a new heart, and the throne of God will soon be met by a new heaven. The New Jerusalem will appear, coming down from God, adorned as a bride for her husband. The Golden City will be brought as a bride to Jesus, but through his unbroken gates there will be let down light for the ignorant, love for the cold-hearted, and joy for the laboring, and enjoyment for the miserable. We are debtors because they are so little of heaven opening upon the earth, and thus entering its joys and pains. But every one who repents from the heart, "Thy kingdom come," is a power with God to expelling the empire of darkness with the reign of light and love. Let all Christians remember the exhortation of the Kingdom, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you," and the pure and open of the upper world will every where meet the eye; and by every dying man will be seen attending angels, a coming Saviour with the rewards of righteousness, and an opening heaven never closed against those brought by his hand within its gates. — *Christian Banner.*

A Full Life.

We often hear Christians offering the prayer of the Psalmist, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom," but how few there are of whom it may be said, they are filling up their days with duty and usefulness. Occasionally we meet one in the maturity of age who is filled with the fullness there is in Jesus, has grace for grace, and like his Master, goes about doing good; but the life of even such a disciple is apt to be like a stick that is round and full in the center, and tapering at both ends. What we desire to see is a life full of usefulness from the beginning to the end. The command, "Go work in your vineyard," does not mean that we should go to work when twenty years old and leave off at fifty. God's service is not like man's service, exhaustive to the physical system. It consists in "doing justly, loving mercy, and walking with our God," and all this the young and the old, the weak and feeble, can do as well as the mature and vigorous. It is not hard work to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world; and this St. James tells us is "pure religion." A man whose "chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy Him," shows the Christian spirit at all times and in all places; shows it in his family, in his shop, on his farm, shows it when alone and when in company, in health and in sickness, in youth and in old age. He cultivates not one, but all the Christian graces, and he develops a character having the fullness, strength, and symmetry analogous to our best ideal of a perfect physique.
Would that Christians could understand the silent but mighty power there is in a life "full of the Holy Ghost," full of the charity that "seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil." The great hindrance to the spread of Christianity in the world is, that it is not fully exemplified in the lives of its professed disciples. Men judge of religion, not by the precepts and example of Christ, but by the lives of Christians; and if these could exhibit daily and constantly the sweet spirit of their Master, they would preach with a power that would carry conviction to the most obstinate. In order to do this they must cultivate all the Christian graces, just as a student cultivates all his mental faculties. We are persuaded there

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is comparatively little of this systematic Christian culture with an eye to the development of "a perfect man, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." We meet with many Christians who have one, or two, or three graces well developed, but it is extremely rare to find one who has given "all diligence to add to his faith, virtue; and to temperance; and to knowledge; and to patience; and to gentleness; and to brotherly kindness; and to charity." If all these graces be in us and abound, our lives will be full of good works, and we shall go on from strength to strength, developing a round, full Christian character so long as life lasts.
We are particularly desirous that young Christians should fix their eyes on the perfect character of Christ, and not mould themselves by the imperfect patterns of men. They are not to be early learners that all they can get out of life is usefulness; that in the consciousness of doing good is the greatest source of happiness, and that in order to do much good in the world there must be systematic, persevering effort. The disciples of Tyndall and Agassiz understand that by order to make any great attainments in science, they must devote themselves closely and untiringly to the study of Nature. The disciples of Jesus must also comprehend that high attainments in Christian life are the result of effort. Godliness is a higher end in life than greatness, and to attain this end requires the exercise of all the powers and faculties with which we are endowed.
We desire also to see those advanced in life keeping all their graces bright by exercise. The late Gov. Bevard, speaking of his tendency to paralysis in his old age, said, "It is motion is my life; I must keep going or I die." So the Christian must keep moving, or his graces will die. If he stops the flow of his benevolence the fountain will dry up. If he ceases to increase his faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, kindness, and charity, these graces will certainly diminish. There is no such thing as standing still in Christian growth. We are either advancing or retrograding, and it is exceedingly desirable that all the graces should be in full exercise even to the end. In the old days of turnpikes and four-horse stage-coaches, we noticed that the driver always cracked his whip and brought up his coach before the hotel at full speed, thus making a good impression on the gazing crowd. If we desire to leave a good impression of Christianity behind us, our prayer and our effort must be, that our life may be "as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Thus only can we "come to our graves in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season." — *Christian Banner.*

Canon Kingsley on Man's Need of Divine Teaching.

Canon Kingsley, in preaching on Sunday morning at Westminster Abbey on the 23d verse of the 119th Psalm, said that while it had always been deeply valued as an experimental Psalm, it was also a theological Psalm, and especially a Psalm of education. The words, "Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes," were the words of a man who wished to be taught, and who wished to gain not mere book learning, but practical instruction. The inspired authors of the Psalm, though writing in many keys, always kept to original strains—always kept before them two thoughts: first, the thought that there was something in the world which they must and would learn, because everything in this world and the next depended on learning; secondly, the thought that if they were to learn, God himself must be the teacher. Thus the Psalm is also a prayer, for its writer was not like too many men now a days, who look upon prayer and inspiration as old-fashioned superstitions—a theory, said the Canon, certainly not supported by past history nor by present experience, if their experience is like mine—but mine, they believed that man can learn nothing unless God teaches him in two ways, first what to do, and then how to do it. Surely such a belief was reasonable, and showed the writer's common sense. Sappho, continued the preacher, you were not in a ship at sea and left to shift for yourself. Would it not be wise to learn how to manage the vessel and how to keep her aloft; to become acquainted with the laws by observing which she would swim, and by breaking which she would sink; to learn the commandments about her, the rules of seamanship and navigation, to gather up the testimonials about her, the witness which she had borne herself as to the way she behaved at sea. And how would you attempt to learn all this! By your own unassisted ideas and theories! I trust not. I presume you would go to the ship-builder and the sail-owner, and therefore it is just as reasonable that you should go, as the Psalmist did, to the Maker of this world for information about it. O how simple is all this, and yet men will not believe it. For each of us is at sea in his own ship. The sea is this world, the ship is ourself, and the land to which we are sailing is eternal life. Shall we make the voyage or not? Shall we sail or not? Shall we sink? Or shall we strive, as the clergyman prayed at our baptism, so to pass the waves of this troublesome world that finally we may come to the land of everlasting life? Certain it is that we shall sink if we do not learn the judgments of God about this mortal life. If we do not keep the laws of God they will keep themselves in spite of us. Do not fancy that you can break God's laws without punishment because you are no longer under the law, but under grace. You are only under grace as long as you are obeying the law. Suppose you went into a mill kept by your own father. Would that save you from being crushed if you got entangled in the machinery?—So the fact that God is your father will not keep you if you fall through wilful ignorance, and your only safety is to learn how to pass through life by keeping his statutes. The Canon then proceeded to insist in detail on the necessity for keeping God's commandments, his testimonies, and his judgments, observing that by the latter term he meant the way in which God rewards and punishes us in this life, and that which is to come. This knowledge may be gained not only from the Bible, but from what happens around us. If men will use their sense and their intellect and observe what goes on in any single city or even in their ordinary circle of friends and acquaintances, they may see how righteousness is rewarded and sin is punished; they may learn enough about God's judgments. But man will not learn. He sees his neighbor punished, and yet goes and does the same thing himself, as if all was accident and chance, and as if he would escape scot free while others suffer. I say again, added the Canon in conclusion, that the only way to attain eternal life is thus to know God's statutes, his commandments, his testimonies, and his judgments, and therefore it is that the Psalmist says they are not merely the way to life, but life itself. — *London Watchman.*

The Gospel.

There is nothing wherein God hath so much put himself, wherein he may be so fully known, communicated with, depended upon, and praised, as in his Gospel. This is a glass in which the blessed angels do see and admire the unsearchable riches of his mercy to the church which they had not by their own observation found out from the immediate view of glorious presence. In the creature we have Him a God of power and wisdom, working all things in number, weight, and measure, by the secret vigor of his providence upholding that being which he gave them, and ordering them to those glorious ends for which he gave it. In the law we have Him a God of vengeance and of recompense, in the publication thereof inflicting wrath upon those that transgress it. But, in the Gospel, we have Him a God of bounty and endless compassion, fumbling himself that he might be merciful to his creatures, that he might himself bear the punishment of those injuries which had been done unto himself, that he might not offer only, but bestow his own prisoners to be pardoned and reconciled again. In the creature he is a God above us, in the law he is a God against us; only in the Gospel he is Immanuel, a God with us; a God like us, a God for us. — *Bishop Reynolds.*

Steering.
One of the most interesting things about a sea voyage is the source of its guidance. If you steer by the direction of the waves, you find they vary. If you run toward or away from the wind, you may steer to all points of the compass in a day. If you follow other vessels, they may lead you from your port, and very possibly you cannot keep in sight of them for twenty-four hours together. So we reach up into subtle, and as it seems, spiritual realms, into currents that never vary, and let the needle point our way. But this mode of interpreting magnetic currents is not perfect. The organism by which we render sensible this ethereal influence, that wind never varies, and tempests never blow aside, is liable to derangement. We render unreliable the true by our handling. The heavenly treasure contracts some taint from the clay. The compass gets various and variable variations; so we must reach far beyond the earth. Its ethereal currents are not high enough. Its most spiritual are too earthy. We go to the stars. Every night that polar star, "whose fixed, unvarying constancy hath no fellow in the firmament," mounts higher in the sky, telling us how far we have crept around this floating ball toward the North. Every night Orion and Pleiades swing lower in the Southern sky. Every night stars rise or reach their zenith earlier to tell us how far we have crept to the East. Already our sunrise is three hours earlier than yours, if you know when that is. I have always been glad that God put us outside of this earth instead of within. He thus invites us to look up, to explore his infinite, and take our guidance from his high, eternal certainties. Thus we are to keep this world under our feet and stand a whole globe higher for our footing.
A captain once couched his helm to a son of Erin, told him to steer straight for a certain star, and turned in. He was just being lulled to sleep in the soothing arms of Ocean, when Pat yelled at him, "Say, Mister, come and give me another star; I have got clear by that one." Many a poor Pat has got clear of God's stars. They were hung as signal lights to guide men straight to the final and eternal glory. But we turn aside and go round the darkness in interlacing curves that only wind in a dizzy limbo. — *Zion's Herald.*

COMMUNION WITH GOD.—True communion with God is chastened by reverence and mingled with awe. Those who affect with the presumptuous familiarity of enthusiasm to approach nearest to Him, do not receive his direct beams, nor most largely occupy His life-giving influence. A great physical fact illustrates their unhappy blunder. "We are three millions of miles nearer the sun on the first of January than on the first of July; and yet on the first of July we glow under the heat of summer, while on the first of January winter chills us with frost and ice. God most warmly and vivifies the soul when it is most turned towards Him; and it is awe and reverence which most turn the soul to God, that the rays of His glory may fall on it. — *Index.*